

## BOOK NOTICE

ELIZABETH FINDLEY SHORES. 2010. **On Harper's Trail: Roland McMillan Harper, Pioneering Botanist of the Southern Coastal Plain.** (ISBN: 978-0-8203-3100-3, cloth). The University of Georgia Press, 4435 Atlanta Highway, Athens, Georgia 30602, U.S.A. (Orders: www.ugapress.org, 1-800-266-5842, 1-706-425-3061 fax). \$44.95 hbk, \$24.95 pbk, 296 pp., 20 b/w photos, 1 illus., 1 map, bib., index, 6" x 9".

*From the publisher:* "Roland McMillan Harper (1878–1966) had perhaps 'the greatest store of field experience of any living botanist of the Southeast,' according to Bassett Maguire, the renowned plant scientist of the New York Botanical Garden. However, Harper's scientific contributions, including his pioneering work on the ecological importance of wetlands and fire, were buried for decades in the enormous collection of photographs and documents he left. In addition, Harper's reputation as a scientist has often been obscured by his reputation as an eccentric. With this book, Elizabeth Findley Shores provides the first full-length biography of the accomplished botanist, documentary photographer, and explorer of the southern coastal plain's wilderness areas.

Incorporating a wealth of detail about Harper's interests, accomplishments, and influences, Shores follows his entire scientific career, which was anchored by a thirty-five-year stint with the Alabama Geological Survey. Shores looks at Harper's collaboration with his brother Francis, as they traced William Bartram's route through Alabama and the Florida panhandle and as Francis edited the Naturalist Edition of *The Travels of William Bartram*. She reveals Roland's acquaintance with some of the most important, and sometimes controversial, scientists of his day, including Nathaniel Britton, Hugo de Vries, and Charles Davenport. Shores also explores Harper's personal relationships and the cluster of personality traits that sparked his interest in genetic predestination and other concepts of the eugenics movement.

Roland Harper described dozens of plant species and varieties, published hundreds of scientific papers, and made notable contributions to geography and geology. In addition to explaining Harper's eminence among southeastern naturalists, this story spans fundamental shifts in the biological sciences—from an emphasis on field observation to a new focus on life at the molecular level, and from the dawn of evolutionary theory to the modern synthesis to sociobiology."

**Elizabeth Findley Shores** is a writer and native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She holds degrees in history from Boston University and the University of Arkansas, Little Rock.